

CALLINGTON HEALTH REPORT FOR 1911.

At Monday's meeting of the Callington Urban Council, the Medical Officer of Health (Dr. H. Davis, jun.) presented his annual report on the health and sanitary condition of the district during the past year, as follows:—

VITAL STATISTICS.

The Census just taken, at a time when the number of unoccupied houses are above the average, the mining industry practically nil, an exceptional exodus of emigrants, and declining birth rate, discloses the enumeration of the population under most unfavourable circumstances, yet the number returned, viz., 1,713, is only one less than at the Census of 1901, which showed a decrease of 100 during the previous ten years. The number of births during the past ten years has steadily decreased from 46 to 32 per annum, but this past year it has increased to 44—24 males and 20 females, a birth rate of 25.6 per 1,000 per annum on a population of 1,713. The number of deaths registered was 23—9 males and 14 females, a death rate of 13.4; natural increase, 21. Three deaths occurred under 1 year, others at 8, 25, and 36, four between 54 and 66, and 13 over 70, the oldest being 91; more than half the deaths occurring at ages over 70 is a very satisfactory record for old-age mortality. Six deaths were recorded as being due to diseases of the respiratory system, of which 2 were tubercular phthisis; there were 2 deaths from cancer, 1 from typhoid fever, 1 from diphtheria, and 13 from other causes. Of these 4 were inquest cases, "natural causes" being returned as the cause of death.

EPIDEMICS.

A case of erysipelas was notified in February. In July a fatal case of typhoid fever occurred. I was unable to trace it to a cause; the usual precautions and disinfectants were employed, and no further spread of the disease took place. In September epidemic diarrhoea was prevalent, but with no serious results. Diphtheria of a particularly fatal type came with a rapid succession of cases in November, nine cases in children attending the Council School, in addition to two other cases in scholars from other districts being notified within a week, one of the nine terminating fatally. I made careful investigation, and was of the opinion that the disease had been imported into the school by a scholar infecting the tap of the water service pipe. This school was at once closed for a month, and disinfected; the disease was immediately arrested, and not a single case occurred up to the end of the year. Dr. Burnet, the County Medical Officer, inspected the school premises, and confirmed my opinion, and approved the closure of the school, but at the time of writing I regret to say that sore throats are again prevalent, and two cases of diphtheria have been notified. Your Council have adopted the Provision of Antitoxin Order. Cerebro-spinal fever and poliomyelitis have been made notifiable, for a period of six months, but no cases have been notified. Vaccination is most unsatisfactory. Callington is one of five parishes which constitute our vaccination district. For the whole of this district 60 certificates for exemption have been granted; of these Callington contributes no less than 26, nearly half, and is therefore the least vaccinated parish in the district.

SEWERAGE.

For the third year in succession it has not been found necessary to do much to our sewerage system; four gully traps, one inspection chamber and a few feet of new sewer in Tavistock-road is all that has been regarded as absolutely necessary. The sewers and traps have fulfilled their functions without fault, and against the exceptionally trying alternations of drought and thunderstorms.

DRAINAGE.

Seven houses have had their drains reconstructed, and four have had considerable repairs; five new w.c.'s have been built.

WATER SUPPLY.

During the past year we experienced what probably a record drought within living memory, lasting from the 10th June to 19th September. Fortunately, during this period we had two severe thunderstorms, accompanied by heavy rain. These occurred at most convenient intervals, and although the rain ran off the parched land to the water courses, without making any appreciable increase to the water supply, it effectively fulfilled the important purpose of flushing our drains and sewers. The supply from the Waterworks Company was considerably reduced early in July. Still, by careful management the water was turned on for two or three hours each day to the end of the drought, consumers at the lowest levels taking advantage of this to fill every available vessel, and in so doing to reduce the pressure that others at the highest levels suffer. Still comparatively few had much reason for complaint. Pipe Well and the fountain supplies again proved their value in times of drought; though reduced to a very small amount they never ceased, and their supply was constant. Times of drought are anxious periods, not only for quantity of water, but quality, so I made frequent analyses of these supplies, and always found them exceedingly pure. There are still nearly 100 pumps in the town, and they held out remarkably well. I examined some supplies of water, and in one isolated well found the water polluted, and the necessary steps were taken. Taking into consideration all sources of supply, we must consider Callington a well-watered town, and the fear of a water famine very remote. I am pleased to say that the Waterworks Company considerably increased their supply, but this came too late to be fully appreciated in the drought.

TRADE PREMISES.

On the whole these are in a satisfactory condition, and no serious defects have been noticed. This being a non-manufacturing district the requirements of the Factory and Workshops Act have not their full significance, but they have been observed as far as the cases in the district permit.

Dairies or cowsheds in many instances have improved, and slaughter houses remain about the same as last year.

HOUSING OF THE WORKING CLASSES.

The Census returns show 434 occupied houses, and about 15 unoccupied, a slight increase on the previous Census; over 30 new houses have been built during the ten years, and nearly the same number of cottages have been demolished. This raises the housing standard; still it fails to provide for the labourer. The Town Planning Act has involved a large amount of additional work. The systematic house-to-house inspection, making careful entry in our books of the numerous details respecting each house, and subsequently tabulating them, is a work that cannot be successfully done in a hurried manner. We have systematically inspected 250 houses, in addition to many casual inspections. Defects would certainly be detected, and acting on these must bring houses into a better sanitary condition. It is gratifying to note that these inspections have revealed very few defects. Two new houses have been built; their sanitary condition is good, and certificates of water supply have been granted. One case of overcrowding has been dealt with as well as circumstances permitted. These cases almost always occur among the poorest classes, where the wages earned are altogether inadequate to pay the rent for a sufficiently commodious dwelling.

SCAVENGING AND HOUSE REFUSE.

This work is conducted in a highly satisfactory manner; no complaints have been made. The additional means for storage of water for watering the streets has been adequate, and the services of the water carts greatly appreciated during the drought. Nuisances have been of far less frequent occurrence, and there is a marked improvement in the number of properly-constructed iron ashbins used. The Sanitary Committee have held several meetings during the year, which have been of great assistance.

MIDWIVES ACT.

This year brings to a close the local supervision of midwives, this being now delegated to another authority. We have had no registered midwife practising in the district, but one case of irregular practice I have notified, resulting in prosecution and conviction.

The Infectious Disease (Notification) Act, 1889, and Part III Public Health (Amendment) Act, 1890, have been adopted. By-laws and regulations in existence are in relation to nuisances, new buildings, slaughter houses and dairies and cowsheds.

